CIA's Files Said to Support Denials

By Jack Anderson and Les Whitten

The Central Intelligence Agency's secret files on American citizens, according to sources who have had access to them, show no evidence of widespread domestic surveillance by the CIA.

Our sources confirm The New York Times report that the CIA has the names of at least 10,000 American citizens in its files. But most of the names were furnished by domestic agencies as part of an intelligence exchange that was established after the assassination of President Kennedy.

The largest batch of names—a computerized printout listing 9,000 antiwar agitators, New Leftists and ghetto militants—was turned over to the CIA in 1969 by the Justice Department's civil disturbance unit.

The unit chief, James Devine, arranged to deliver the names to the CIA's anti-terrorist expert, Richard Ober, who had made a study of radical movements overseas.

From the 9,000 names, the CIA picked out those who had received training or had participated in demonstrations overseas. This information was relayed back to the Justice Department for its guidance in dealing with domestic demonstrations.

The CIA prepared reports, for example, on Black Panthers who had received guerrilla training in Libya and demolition instruction in North Korea. The CIA also identified Arab students in America who had alleged ties with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

But only rarely, the files show, did the CIA keep these individuals under surveillance in the United States. Sometimes, the CIA would tail a suspect to the United States and continue the surveillance for a few days until the watch could be turned over to the FBI. But few Americans have been spied upon by the CIA at home, our sources swear.

"The CIA simply doesn't have the manpower to keep 10,000 Americans under surveillance," said one source.

We also checked various law enforcement agencies to find out what kind of information they had received from the CIA about American citizens. The word from each agency was that CIA messages invariably contain a legitimate overseas angle.

Declared one official emphatically: "There is no program, no project, no policy set up to permit the CIA to conduct surveillance of citizens in the United States."

At the same time, our sources acknowledged there were several "gray areas," where the CIA has crossed into domestic operations. The CIA, for example, may develop informants, defectors and double agents overseas who refuse to deal with anyone else after their arrival in the United States.

The CIA also gets involved in international counterintelligence, which has no geographical boundaries. It sometimes becomes necessary for the CIA to continue following a lead or checking a suspect in the United States. The CIA also has been brought into the intelligence operations against foreign embassies and consulates in the United States.

Nor is it any secret that the CIA keeps track of both pro-Castro and anti-Castro Cuban nationals in this country, as part of its watch on Cuba. And the law gives the CIA authority to handle its own security, including background checks on American citizens.

The CIA files, of course, contain derogatory information about wholly innocent citizens. For years, we have reported how government agencies traffic in dossiers which are loaded with idle gossip about American citizens. As far back as Nov. 20, 1972, we reported that the CIA was involved in this exchange.

We quoted from one CIA memo, which offered the latest gossip on Eartha Kitt's sex life in Paris. This information was provided to the Secret Service, which had started an investigation of the entertainer after she had embarrassed Lady Bird Johnson by asking a pointed question about the Vietnam war at a Jan. 18, 1968, White House luncheon.

Quite obviously, neither the CIA nor the Secret Service has any business prying into Eartha Kitt's private life.

The exchange of derogatory information between agencies increased after the Warren Commission, investigating President Kennedy's assassination, complained about the lack of collaboration

Thereafter, the agencies began to alert one another to intelligence that might be of interest and to request information that might be helpful in their investigations

The FBI sent a liaison man, Sam Papich, to work with the CIA. He worked long hours, straightening out differences over jurisdiction and operational approaches

This cooperation was abruptly canceled by the late FBI chief J Edgar Hoover because of a silly dispute over a missing Czechoslovakian defector The defector turned professor, Thomas Riha, disappeared from the University of Colorado on March 15, 1969 An FBI agent reported to the CIA that he had gone to Montreal to pout after a domestic squabble Hoover demanded to know the identity of the CIA's FBI informant, the CIA refused to reveal it, so Hoover shut off the liaison. Not until several months after his death was the cooperation resumed

Footnote. Riha never turned up Subsequently, a woman named Gayla Tannenbaum was arrested in connection with his alleged murder and committed to Pueblo State Hospital as mentally incompetent

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